E PLURIBUS UNUM

MRS. CLINTON

welcomes you to

THE WHITE HOUSE

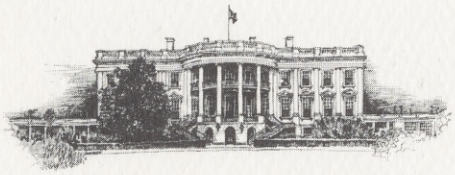
In celebration of the

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT

FOR THE ARTS

1997 NATIONAL HERITAGE

FELLOWSHIPS



Tuesday, September 23, 1997

NATIONAL HERITAGE FELLOWSHIPS

Since 1982, the Endowment's Folk and Traditional Arts Program has awarded over 200 National Heritage Fellowships. Artists are nominated by fellow citizens and selected by a panel of folk art advisors on the basis of artistic excellence and contributions to the preservation of this nation's cultural heritage. In addition to recognition for their artistry, National Heritage Fellows are acknowledged for their work as teachers, role models or mentors, and innovators.

PROGRAM

Performance by

The McCollough Sons of Thunder
I Saw the Light
Oh Happy Day

Fellowship Presentation
and Remarks by

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Jane Alexander
Chairman of the
National Endowment for the Arts

Performance by

The McCollough Sons of Thunder
We Shall Overcome

1997 NATIONAL HERITAGE

Edward Babb (Jamaica, New York) is an early creator of a musical tradition called the "shout band," a unique and vibrant style combining instrumental jazz with gospel hymns. As the trombone-playing director of The McCollough Sons of Thunder brass band and musical model of his community, Elder Babb has energized the worship services of Harlem's United House of Prayer for nearly three decades, taking time out to accept a "Legends of Leaders" award from his church and to grace the stage at Carnegie Hall.

Charles Brown (Berkeley, California) is among the foremost inventors of the sophisticated yet relaxed West Coast blues style which influenced such greats as Ray Charles and Nat King Cole. With The Three Blazers in 1944, Brown recorded the classics "Driftin' Blues," "Merry Christmas Baby," and "Sunny Road." He later toured with Fats Domino, Bill Doggett, and Roy Brown. Recently, acclaim has returned to him through a PBS profile in "That Rhythm . . . Those Blues," a 1987 "comeback" recording *One More for the Road*, and a 1995 headline spot on the nationally broadcast "American Roots Fourth of July" radio concert. In 1997, he was inducted into the Blues Foundation's Blues Hall of Fame.

Gladys LeBlanc Clark (Duson, Louisiana) is a deeply traditional inheritor and guardian of the cherished and distinctive art of Acadian or Cajun weaving. Clark's family—her mother, aunt, grandmother, and great-grandmother—were all spinners and weavers. Throughout her life, Clark has grown, picked, seeded, carded, spun, and woven cotton on her farm. She is a master teacher, who has demonstrated her craft throughout Louisiana and, in 1996, was honored with the Acadian Folk Heritage Award.

FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS

Hua Wenyi (Arcadia, California) is internationally regarded as the premier artist in one of China's oldest and most refined forms of opera—the *kunqu*. Ms. Hua, considered the model for the prestigious and demanding female role of *guimendan*, is acclaimed for her exquisite gesticulation, flawless diction, and beautiful voice. In the early 80s, she directed the Shanghai Kun Opera Company; in 1986, she received China's highest artistic honor. In 1989, she resettled in the U.S. to further her work internationally and founded the highly regarded Hua Kun Opera in San Francisco, which successfully mixes tradition and experimentation.

Ali Akbar Khan (San Anselmo, California) is a master of the *sarod*, a 25-string lute-like instrument. With a family musical history dating to the 16th century court of Akbar, the North Indian Moghul Emperor, he trained with his father—who also taught the great sitarist Ravi Shankar—and his uncle for 20 years, practicing 18 hours a day. His fame has led to recordings and annual worldwide tours with stops at Carnegie Hall, Tokyo's East-West Encounter, and the Monterery Jazz Festival. The Ali Akbar College of Music he founded in 1967 now has trained 7,000 devotees. His prestigious honors include the President of India Award and a MacArthur Foundation genius grant.

Ramón José López (Santa Fe, New Mexico) is an exceptional creator of contemporary sacred images, renowned for his skill, versatility, and dedication to the rich Hispanic traditions which flourished in the Southwest. Using tools that belonged to his *santero* grandfather, Mr. López carves exquisite wooden icons, paints colorful altar screens, and forges intricate silver jewelry, candlesticks, and chalices. Mr. López is an innovator within tradition whose work has earned Sante Fe's Spanish Colonial Market's Grand Prize and can be found in The Albuquerque Museum, the New Mexico State Capitol, and the Smithsonian Institution.

Jim and Jesse McReynolds (Gallatin, Tennessee) took the long-standing vocal duet, close-harmony style of Bluegrass music to new levels. Born two years apart, the brothers were part of a Virginia family of coal miners and farmers who doubled as accomplished members of popular local string bands. Although their careers were disrupted when Jim served in World War II and Jesse in the Korean War, Jim returned to the guitar, and Jesse began developing new techniques for mandolin. In the 1950s, the two roamed from radio station to radio station, winning contests, and developing a faithful following. Their big break came in 1964, when they joined the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, where they have remained for 33 years.

Phong Nguyen (Kent, Ohio) is the principal guardian of a complex and dynamic Vietnamese musical tradition buffeted by both war and modernity. From age five, he studied music with a village master and became proficient on many instruments, especially strings. He spent a decade learning Buddhist chants, later playing professional Vietnamese theater music, and collecting a rare repertoire of musical material from the mountains and farms. Since resettling in the United States in 1974, he has been performing extensively, recording, and teaching at Kent State University, the University of Washington, and UCLA.

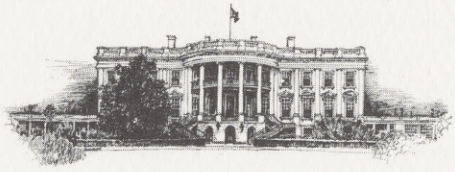
Hystercine Rankin (Lorman, Mississippi) learned her quilting from her grandmother at age 12, and vividly demonstrates that many necessary activities are also opportunities to create beauty. At first, she mostly quilted to keep her family warm, but later began designing quilts inspired by important moments in her life. In 1991, Ms. Rankin received the state of Mississippi's highest award in the arts, the Susan B. Herron Fellowship. She has been the master quilter and teacher at Mississippi Cultural Crossroads since 1988, exhibited at the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife in 1996, and has been featured in numerous publications.

Francis Whitaker (Carbondale, Colorado) known as "the dean of American blacksmiths," has done more than any other to strengthen the ties of tradition among U.S. blacksmiths. Born in Woburn, Massachusetts in 1906, at age 16 he apprenticed in Philadelphia with Samuel Yellin, the premier ornamental blacksmith of the day, and later worked in Berlin with the German master Julius Schramm. In 1933, he opened his own shop in Carmel, California where, despite the Depression, the Spanish Revival in design made work plentiful. In 1963, he moved his shop to Aspen, Colorado, later founding the Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Schools, and earning the 1995 Colorado Governor's Award for Excellence in Arts. Now celebrating 75 years or three quarters of a century in blacksmithing, Whitaker's career is marked by an iron-willed dedication to excellence.

Georgia Harris (1905–1997) learned her Native American Catawba pottery tradition in South Carolina from her mother and grandmother. She was uncompromising in her devotion to the highest standards of traditional artistry, while at the same time introducing new forms and techniques that revivified Catawba pottery production among her people. Mrs. Harris was widely recognized as the finest Catawba potter of the twentieth century. *(Awarded posthumously)*

THE McCOLLOUGH SONS OF THUNDER

Today, there are over one hundred and thirty United Houses of Prayer, each with one or more large "shout bands." The House of Prayer, in what congregation members call "Sweet Honey, Heaven Harlem," is on the corner of 125th Street and 8th Avenue in New York City. The senior band at the church is the McCollough Sons of Thunder brass band. This brass band, in existence for almost three decades, is under the direction of lead trombonist Edward Babb. Mr. Babb is one of this year's receipients of a National Heritage Fellowship. Mr. Babb conducts a "chorus" of 15 trombones in unison and section arranged "voices." In addition there is usually a sousaphone, pecussionist, and occasionally other horns. The results are overwhelming as the sound level of all those horns shakes the church.



UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive
Hua Wen-yi Collection 2023.06
OMD 030